



FIG. 2361. THE HALE PEACH ORCHARDS.

trees was now started, and the next year, during the fruiting season, a trip was made to Delaware to study varieties and methods. At that time, so far as I know, there was not a commercial peach orchard north of New York, and the following spring, when I planted out an orchard of 3,000 trees, it was the general opinion that the attempt to grow peaches on a commercial scale as far north as central Connecticut was a crazy scheme of an inexperienced youth, and could only result in failure.

Looking over the situation from time to time, and hunting up old fruiting trees in neighboring towns, wherever I could find them, it took but a few years to learn that the killing of fruit buds by the extreme cold of winter was one great danger to be feared. I found that side hills and tree tops had a way of sliding the frost down into the lowlands; and by tramping around with a thermometer just at daylight some of the coldest mornings, I found temperatures varying all the way from fifteen to twenty below zero on the level and in the valleys, while on the hill

sides, not over fifty feet above, the tube would show from eight to twelve below, and on the hilltops of 200 or 300 feet elevation, scarcely a mile away, the mercury would register nearly zero.

Here, then, was the place for peaches, if soil and other conditions were right. By straining to the utmost my slender resources and depending upon the berry fields for ready cash to keep the venture going, I managed to secure and plant nearly 10,000 trees in two blocks. I set about leasing what I thought were suitable lands for further development in the early eighties. One block was on land owned by a widow 94 years old, who, after signing the lease with her own hand, said, "Now, I am going to live long enough to see this peach orchard in fruit. How long will it take?" When she was told that it would be four or five years at least, and possibly longer if the winters were too severe, she smiled, and said, "Well, I will wait to see one crop, anyway." Six years later, when the first moderate crop came, I took the dear old lady,